

<b>DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION</b>	<b>TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE MANUAL</b>	
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>COMAR 07.03.03.04</b>	<b>Section 204</b>

The Assessment is completed prior to the Family Independence Plan (FIP) (See Section 205 for details on the FIP). The Assessment identifies the customer's/family's barriers to participation in achieving their goals. It also considers the customer's/family's educational level, abilities, job skills and readiness, and includes questions to determine TCA eligibility.

The Assessment is the road map to tell the case manager and the customer where the customer has been, where the customer is, and where the customer is going in the future. Assessing the customer's abilities, needs, interests and goals is a vital step in helping her/him reach the goal of being independent from public assistance. The assessment should be clear and detailed.

#### **204.1 Definitions That Apply to the Assessment and Family Independence Plan**

- A. Good faith effort means the customer has made every effort to meet the terms outlined for the customer in the FIP.
- B. Supportive services are services provided to the TCA family based on the assessed needs of the customer by the local department or through referrals to service providers (such as counseling, Social Services, vocational rehabilitation referral, education, training, other evaluations).
- C. Work eligible individuals (WEI) are the individuals applying for or receiving TCA benefits that are required to be counted in the federal work participation rate.
  - Long term disabled customers are now counted in the federal work participation rate and should be offered supportive services to enable them to become self sufficient.
  - While long term disabled adults remain exempt from work requirements under state law and COMAR, they have the right to participate voluntarily in TCA work activities.

#### **204.2 The Assessment Requirements**

- A. The Assessment begins the day the customer files an application for TCA and ends when the TCA case closes.
  - 1. The case manager begins the assessment during the TCA application process. (This Assessment is referred to as the "Initial Assessment".)

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2. The case manager also begins assessment before the customer is assigned to a work activity. This process helps you identify individuals with disabilities that may either exempt them from work activity requirements or who need an accommodation in order to work.
- B. If the applicant is a caretaker relative who is not needy and is not financially responsible for the children, the focus of the assessment is on the needs of the children and the resources available to them.
- The needs of the caretaker relative should be assessed with respect to the caretaker's ability to care for the children.
- C. The assessment includes:
1. The reason the customer is applying for or continuing to rely on assistance.
  2. Other resources and options available to the family.
  3. Family needs.
  4. Educational level, job skills, job readiness, and areas of interest for all work mandatory assistance unit members. You must determine:
    - a. Appropriate and available work programs;
    - b. Jobs which can be pursued now;
    - c. Available options if the person is disabled either temporarily or permanently;
    - d. Available options if the person has limited English proficiency;
    - e. Available personal and family resources;
    - f. Support to retain, achieve, and maintain independence;
    - g. Needed and available medical care;
    - h. Needed and available child or adult day care;
    - i. Availability of potential resources, such as:
      - Unemployment Insurance;
      - Supplemental Security Income (SSI); and
      - Social Security Benefits.
    - j. Is there a history of family violence?
      - Who is involved?
      - Who is the aggressor and who are the victims?
      - Is the family in counseling?
      - Where?
      - What is the plan to protect and help the family?

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- What resources does the family have if they have to leave the home without notice?
  - How does the family situation affect the family in achieving independence?
  - What if any program requirements are waived because of the family violence? For how long?
  - What are family members expected to do?
- k. Family history of substance abuse:
- Is treatment needed?
  - If treatment was received, where and when?
  - Was treatment completed successfully?
  - What is the effect on employability?
- D. Each local department has an assessment guide.

**Reminder:** The Assessment must be reviewed and updated at each redetermination and change in the customer's situation, and whenever the FIP is updated.

- E. Based on the assessment, the case manager and the customer:
1. Determine the services and resources needed for the family to achieve independence and;
  2. Develop the FIP; and
  3. Develop an agreement with the applicant to define the FIP implementation steps.
- F. All LDSS case managers, employment specialists, vendors and others working with the family must frequently review and update the assessment and the FIP plan to ensure the family is progressing and all needed resources are available.
- G. LDSS employees and their representatives (vendors) working with the family must keep the lines of communication open and work as a team to help the family. Whether the interaction is with the case manager or the employment specialist, all customer information must be shared with other members of the team.

**Example:** Martha Johnson tells the case manager that she can't go to her activity because she is moving. There has been family violence and she is afraid for her children and herself. The case manager does not forward the information to the employment specialist. A week later the case manager receives a notice from the vendor that Ms.

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Johnson failed to attend her activity and they have been unable to contact her. A Notice of Non-Compliance (NONC) was sent to Ms. Johnson's address and was returned by the Post Office.

- Ms. Johnson advised the case manager she would miss her activity.
- Ms. Johnson has good cause for missing her activity because of the incidence of family violence, which she reported.
- She reported she was moving.
- Had the case manager let the vendor know of the situation, the vendor would not have sent the NONC.

Similar problems can occur when the vendor does not let the case manager know information.

#### **204.5 Reviewing and Updating the Assessment**

- A. Update the Assessment at redetermination, interim change, and whenever there is an update to the FIP.
- B. Review and update the Assessment when the customer/household reaches 42-48 months of TCA (see Section 0313 of the TCA Manual).
- C. Review and update the Assessment when the customer/household reaches 59-60 months of TCA (see Section 0313 of the TCA Manual).
- D. Once a hardship exemption has been granted, review and update the Assessment within six months and every six months thereafter. (See Section 0313 of the TCA Manual.)
- E. The case manager may schedule interim appointments between recertifications that include a review of the Assessment and amendments to the Assessments needed.
- F. Each local department developed an agreement format tailored to meet the needs of that jurisdiction and its customers.